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WESTERN RESERVE  
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HISTORICAL SOCIETY

# Western Reserve and Northern Ohio HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

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## THE GRAVE CREEK INSCRIBED STONE.

BY COL. CHAS. WHITTLESEY.

At the Cincinnati meeting of the Ohio State Archæological Society in September 1877, a committee was appointed to report upon the genuineness of the Grave Creek Stone. Mr. Wharton, one of its members, having asserted in the most positive manner that he was present when it was found, and that there could have been no deception practiced on him. The gentlemen comprising the committee have a thorough knowledge of what pertains to home archaeology. They are the Rev. J. B. McLane, Hamilton, Ohio; A. E. A. Taylor, President of Wooster University, and Prof. M. C. Read, of ~~Hudson~~ College, Ohio. At the meeting of this society at Wooster, Ohio, in September, 1878, Prof. Read made an exhaustive report, including much new correspondence, the conclusions of which are against the genuineness of the inscription. It was concurred in by President Taylor, and has been printed in the January number of the *American Antiquarian*, Cleveland, Ohio.

In February, 1878, I received from Mr. R. W. Mercer, of Cincinnati, a well informed dealer in Western relics, a letter which states that Mr. Boreman, who for the past sixteen years has been postmaster at Parkersburg, in West Virginia, had recently told Mr. Mercer that he knew the man who made that tablet, and put it in the mound, while the excavation was going on. President I. W. Andrews, of Marietta College, near Parkersburg, on being informed of the above statement, visited Mr. Boreman at his home. His report of the interview is that it was not very explicit.

"Mr. Boreman, the Postmaster, knew the man who is supposed to have hoaxed Mr. Tomlinson, the owner of the mound. His name was David Gatewood, and lived near the mound at the time it was opened."

"Mr. B. is confident that some one told him that Gatewood admitted he cut the characters on the stone and threw it into the excavation while the men were away, but cannot recall the person who informed him." \* \* \*

"I saw another gentleman who had some knowledge of the stone, but seemed to doubt whether there was anything more than suspicion to base the idea upon, and did not speak as he thought Gatewood admitted it."

Hitherto the doubts which have been thrown over this inscription were based entirely upon general conclusions. The direct proofs were all in favor of its antiquity. At least half a dozen persons of credibility have stated over their signatures that they believe it to be what Mr. Tomlinson claimed for it in 1842. More than one of them was present when it was first produced. They do not precisely agree in the details, but are as nearly in accord as is usual in such cases. But none of these witnesses had stated that they saw the stone imbedded in the undisturbed matrix of the mound. This main fact being wanting, there were so many improbabilities on the other side that Mr. Squier and Prof. Wilson were confident, thirty years since, that it is a fraud. The critical ability of Mr. Schoolcraft, who took the opposite ground, was not such as to give much weight to his opinion.

Messrs. Jomard, Schwab, Goppert and Bing, in Europe, appear to have relied upon Mr. Schoolcraft without further investigation. A majority of the "Americanistes," at their meeting in Nancy and at Luxembourg, regarded it as impossible that there should be any Semitic writings or inscriptions in America.

Prof. Leon de Rosny denied before the Con-

gress at Nancy (vol. 2, p. 81) that there is any evidence of a knowledge of writing in Ancient America on the phonetic or alphabetic system, in which he agrees with Humboldt and Klaproth. They regard the Mexican picture writing as originally a close resemblance to the modern rebus. Rosny discussed the Maya manuscripts, for which he denied any resemblance to either the cursive, abridged or demotic writings, of Africa and Asia. He says:

Of the Maya manuscripts there are three—1st, Codex of Dresden, written upon Agave tissue; 2d, in the Bibliothèque-National, found by me in 1859, called "Codex of Perez," or Perezine; 3d, the one of the Abbe de Brasseur de Bourbourg, who found at Madrid the manuscripts of Diego de Landa, the first Bishop of Yucatan. This embraces a sort of Maya alphabet, an almanac and a poem, but the Abbe's decipherment rests on nothing.

Herbert Bancroft and Mr. W. Balbouts take the same view. All attempts to read these manuscripts, in the opinion of M. Rosny, have failed. The only direct disclaimer of the Congress, as to the translation of Mr. Bing, will be found in a note on page 225, volume 2, in these words:

"The reader will find on page 130 two translations of the Grave Creek inscription, not having any relation to each other, and entirely different from that of Monsieur Bing." The first is by Mr. M. Schwab, and the second by Mr. Oppert. Messrs. Castelnau, Jomard Schwab, Oppert and Prof. Turner, of New York, consider it to be Phœnician, and therefore Semitic.

Prof. Paul Gaffarel, of Dijon, differs from them, and says (p. 130) very judiciously: "Few problems are more interesting to discuss, but before arriving at a conclusion more proofs and more solid arguments are necessary than we now have or probably ever shall have." Mr. Lucien Adams, remarking upon the paper of Hyde Clark, Vice President of the Anthropological Institute of London (Compte Rendu, vol. 1, p. 157), says:

"The Congress of Americanists has not alone the mission of illuminating the facts, on which we may erect theories with some degree of certainty; it should also defer to the examination of American scholars, those hasty systems of which in our times there is found too easy an acceptance in the common and the polemic world. The session at Nancy, signalized among the linguists the theory of Aryan races in Peru, which began to be diffused in latin America and elsewhere. In the *Compte Rendu* of Luxembourg you will see a memoir of Mr. Henry, which does full justice to the chimera of an Indo-European language, through the dictionary, and of a poly-synthetic through grammar. The same congress had invited archaeologists, to examine very closely the pretended Semitic inscriptions, which come to us from time to time from a country where it appears the celebrated mystifier Barnum has a school. Col. Whittlesey has responded to this appeal by a brochure which has the significant title of "Archæological Frauds."

In August, 1878, I visited Moundville and the great mound, where several people are yet living who saw it opened in 1858. One of

the horses which drew the omnibus from the depot to the hotel, was said to have been recently exhumed from the mound. He had fallen into the shaft, which is still in good condition. Being evidently alive, the old adit on the north side was cleaned out, and the animal rescued through it very little injured. I now give the information procured at Moundville.

#### CONVERSATION WITH MR. P. B. CATLETT.

Mr. Catlett appeared to be about seventy years old, his mind and physical constitution as good as usual with men of his age. He said:

"I was in the adit the day the stone was found with hieroglyphics on it. One man came out with a wheelbarrow load of earth and dumped it on the pile. Then another man came out and dumped another barrow load in the same place. I was looking about the pile and was the first who saw the stone and took it in my hands. The upper vault had fallen in, and Mr. Tomlinson thought that it came from the upper vault, but I thought that it came from the lower one."

"David Gatewood was a plasterer, and plastered the room which Mr. Tomlinson made at the center of the mound. He did not live here very long. I worked for Tomlinson in the adit and the room. I afterwards kept the room in which the relics were placed. Many of them were lost. Mr. T. did not pay much attention to them. Most of them were carried away, and the roof fell in. A part of one of the skeletons is there yet. The shaft is still good, being walled with brick. The upper vault fell in after we reached the center of the mound."

Mrs. Richard Paul, of Moundville, is a daughter of David Gatewood. She states that she has heard her father speak about these relics, but she was then a small girl and remembers nothing which he said in particular. He soon after moved away and died at Reedsville, Ohio.

Mrs. Alston lives at Moundville. She is a widow, and sister of Mrs. Paul. She states that her father died about fourteen (14) and her mother four (4) years since. Heard her mother talk about the stone, but remembers nothing, as she was very young.

It must be admitted that the proof is not conclusive against Gatewood, and amounts to little more than suspicion. I agree with Prof. Read that the characters on the stone, by whomsoever they were cut, are *not alphabetical or phonetic*. If they have any meaning and are not a mere jumble of characters, they must be symbolic or picture writing. It is therefore of small consequence whether the stone is antique or modern, whether it is genuine or a fraud.

In my remarks upon the translation by Monsieur Levy Bing, I quoted a rendering of it made by Mr. M. Schwab, who attended the congress at Luxembourg, as a representative of the Philological Society of Paris. He is a profound scholar in languages, and brought to Luxembourg a treatise upon the Grave Creek Stone, where he first saw my criticism upon its genuineness. On seeing this he declined to read his paper but requested the committee on publication, to insert it in their *Compte-Rendu*. This was not done



and its contents which must be valuable and recondite have not yet transpired.

At the sitting of September 12, 1877, he made the following remarks, for the translation of which I am indebted to Mrs. C. C. Baldwin, of this city:

"As to myself truth obliges me to confess ignorance of what pertains to America. I am thoroughly Hebrew; therefore it was of an inscription given out to be Phœnician, by those who discovered it, that I prepared to treat before you. But only yesterday I had knowledge of a brochure by Colonel Whittlesey on "archæological frauds" in the United States, and I acknowledge that the reading of this document gives rise in my mind to the gravest doubts.

On the testimony of an archæologist of merit (Mr. Schoolcraft), who has not doubted what Col. Whittlesey call the "genuineness" of the Grave Creek inscription; I undertook the decipherment of the stone eleven years since. Mr. Goppert has had the goodness to examine my efforts at a translation. I declare boldly that this illustrious linguist and paleographer, bestowed only a hasty examination, and took no decisive position upon either the authenticity or the interpretation of this stone. His high scientific responsibility is in no wise pledged in this discussion based upon the testimony of Mr. Schoolcraft, and without prejudice, whether the text was the work of a forger. Each one to his task. I am informed within twenty-four hours that three eminent archæologists, E. George Squier, Daniel Wilson and E. H. Davis, have returned a verdict absolutely negative, upon the authenticity of this stone. Under these circumstances I present you my hasty epitome which will convince you that it was ingenious in the forger to make a semitic inscription, but content myself with simply asking the publication of my memoir in the proceedings of this session."

After this very frank statement of Mr. Schwab, Mr. Lucien Adams, one of the leading members of Congress, made the following remarks:

"Mr. Schwab has demonstrated that true science is not overcome, by either doubts or self-love. I say boldly that after the declarations he has made, the question of the Grave Creek Stone is settled in the old world as well as in the new. I have, however, this duty, to disclaim all responsibility of the Congress at Nancy. In the brochure of which Mr. Schwab has spoken, Colonel W. implies that the members of that session, must have been convinced of the authenticity of this inscription as presented by Mr. L. Bing.

This eminent Americaniste will allow me to observe that the question of authenticity was not raised at Nancy, and that there is a note appended to the memoir of Mr. Bing by the Committee of Publication, which explains, in a very courteous but explicit manner, in the opinion of the Congress. Since we are not compromised from the other side of the Atlantic, I declare in the name of the committee of the first session, that the Americanistes at Nancy, did not receive the version of Mr. Bing the authenticity of the inscription, or the presence on American soil, before Columbus, of the Semitic element."

To the remark of Mr. Adams respecting the note of the committee of publication I should state that I find one at the foot of page 192, Tome Second proceedings at Nancy; disclaiming for the congress any sanction for a supposed Hebrew inscription, copied in the Compte-Rendu purporting to have been taken from a mound somewhere in Licking county, Ohio.

LUXEMBOURG MEETING, TOME 1—p. 170.  
From remarks by Major De Helwald, of Austria.

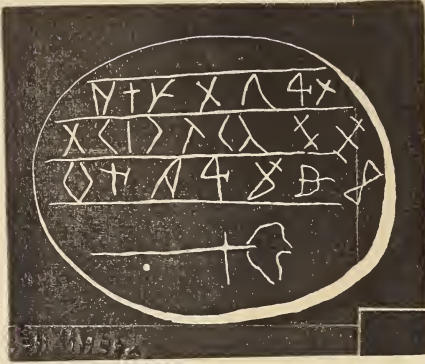
"We must admit the investigations into the origin of American civilization, which have been during the two last sittings the principal object of our studies, do not furnish the critic with solid grounds by which it is possible to distinguish clearly truth from error. The question of this origin is particularly troublesome, although I think it not useless at this moment, where we hope to reach certain history, to endeavor to give an exact account of the results which we have obtained and of those we hope to obtain in the near future. This problem of origin, enveloped as it is in thick darkness, extends beyond the purposes of this Congress; in its programme on the study of American civilization. The ante-Columbian history of America, to use an expression I proposed at yesterday's sitting, embraces two distinct epochs. The first, that which immediately preceded the discovery, and which is supported by reliable documents, more or less authentic; but documents that may be used on condition they are submitted to severe criticism. The other and anterior epoch ascends even to the origin. It precedes the state of things of which we have a partial knowledge, which I will call historic.

Must I insist on the consideration that such a civilization as Europeans found in America, necessarily required centuries for its development? If we are asked for the duration of this epoch answer frankly, that we know very imperfectly and really not at all. However that may be, there is no doubt that as to the certain period we are on an ocean of hypotheses, floating according to every caprice. Hypotheses? How they surged about at Nancy, they are surging now at Luxembourg; and I apprehend they will continue to surge during the third session.

Permit me to request this Congress to restrain the growing studies relating to America, and confine them to questions where we can see clearly, or at least such as are amenable to fair criticism. Especially let us be skeptical, very skeptical, in the theories given in the Memoirs just read. I do not undertake to criticise those papers, but I must say that for the most part they contain only hypotheses with slight foundations. I do not absolutely deny the value of hypotheses, but in a science as young as ours it is necessary above all things to have a base upon which can be erected something durable."

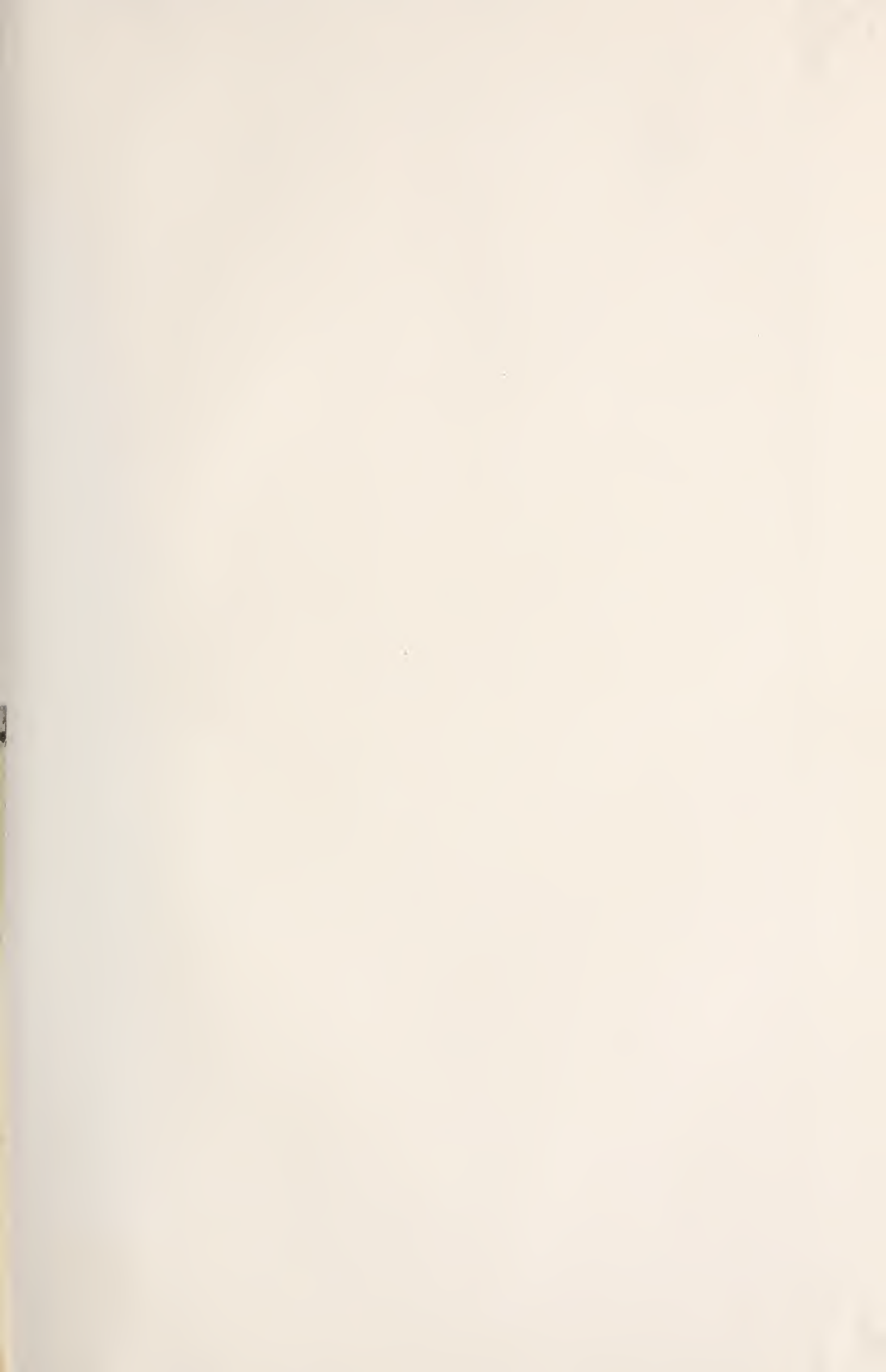
Many copies of this stone, which for its diminutive size and the few characters upon it, has attained an undue notoriety, have been published during the past forty years. Most of them are carelessly made. The European discussions and translations are based upon imperfect copies, all of which were reproduced in our tract No. 33 for November, 1876.

## THE GRAVE CREEK STONE.



I insert again the only correct copy made by Captain Eastman, United States Army, from the original in 1850, for "*Schoolcraft's Indian tribes.*" It is of the size of nature, a thin oval piece of sandstone; the back of which is blank.

If Professor Read and myself are right in our conclusions, that the figures are neither of the Runic, Phonician, Canaanite, Hebrew, Lybian, Celtic, or any other alphabet language, its importance has been greatly overrated.









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